May 2018 | FAQ: Why is doctor as teacher a principle of naturopathic medicine?

Naturopathic doctors follow six guiding principles that serve as a philosophical platform for everything they do. The principles influence how they think about medicine, how they make clinical decisions, and most importantly, how they treat you as a patient. Each principle plays a role in guiding naturopathic doctors in diagnosis and treatment. The doctor as teacher is one of these six core principles.

If you don’t always follow your doctor’s instructions, you’re not alone. Studies show that non-compliance to doctor recommendations is epidemic, and it can lead to ineffective treatment or further health concerns. Non-compliance often stems from not having a clear understanding of the treatment plan and strategy. Many patients struggle to understand “physician-speak,” and may not fully grasp clinical explanations and care directions.

Licensed naturopathic doctors (NDs) believe that an informed patient is ready to take an active role in the healing process.

Naturopathic doctors work to explain each health concern you have and each approach that will be utilized to help address it.

NDs aim to answer your questions so you can fully understand and participate in your therapeutic plan.

Communication with you, the patient, is an essential element of working with any naturopathic doctor. Because each patient is seen as an individual, not just a diagnosis, naturopathic doctors prioritize empathy, connection, and sharing of relevant information. In order to educate and inform patients adequately, NDs often spend one hour or more with patients in an initial appointment, compared to an average 20 minute appointment with a conventionally trained physician.

Educated patients who understand the treatment recommendations often have better success with treatment and feel more confident about their health care choices. Research shows that better communication and collaborative decision making between doctors and patients drives health care costs down.
Because of their focus on patient education and patient empowerment, naturopathic doctors may be a good fit for individuals who prefer to be active participants in their health care, and who are looking for a fresh perspective on preventive care and natural treatment options for improved health.

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